

Prayer for the day, Wednesday 6th May, Jeff Burditt on Julian of Norwich

This week (May 8th), we celebrate the life of Julian of Norwich. Julian lived from 1343 to about 1416, but it was not until the 20th century that she became very well-known with the publication of her book: "Revelations of Divine Love". This is an amazing book, not only for its content but for the fact that it was written by a woman and was the first book to be written in English, rather than Latin.

We don't know her real name. She was called Julian because that was the name of the church in which she spent almost her entire life. She was an anchoress - which means "one who has retired from this world".

She lived in a tiny bricked up cell next to the St. Julian church in Norwich. It had 3 very small windows - one looking into the church so she could receive the eucharist, one so that people could hand her food, and another to let in the light. People would come and talk to her and receive spiritual counselling - she was so highly thought of.

When she was about 30, she had a series of 16 "shewings" (or visions) of Jesus on the cross, and from these visions, in which she heard the voice of God speaking to her, she wrote the Revelations of Divine Love, a book that has inspired generations.

If you don't fancy reading the whole thing, there is a tiny book called "Enfolded in Love: Daily Readings with Julian of Norwich" which is much simpler and gets to the heart of her message. Recently (in March) there was an article comparing Julian's self-isolation to our own - a way of finding calm and quiet in a chaotic world. A nice idea but very difficult for those struggling with health, stress, families etc. Pope Benedict XV1 summarised her message thus: "God is love and it is only if one opens oneself to this love totally, and with total trust, all things are transformed, true peace and true joy found".

I leave you with a few quotes from the original for you to ponder. The message is familiar even if the quotes aren't.

"And so, I saw full surely that before ever God made us, He loved us and this love was never quenched, nor ever shall be"

"Would you know your Lord's meaning in this? Learn it well. Love was His meaning. He wants us to enjoy everything in love.

"I saw that God rejoices that He is our father, and God rejoices that He is our mother."

And perhaps the most famous of all: - "Prayer teaches that all shall be well and all shall be well and all manner of thing shall be well"

Love is the Christian hope isn't it? "God so loved the world that he sent His Only Son ..."

And we pray together that all shall be well ... and all manner of thing shall be well. Let us pray that continually.

God bless us all.

Jeff

PS If you're interested, you can visit the Julian shrine in Norwich when life returns to something approaching normality - or go on the Julian of Norwich website. The shops in Norwich are good too!